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## DOCUMENTS

The following letter was addressed to the City Council of Washington, D. C., July 15, 1833, by Joseph Jefferson, Sr., and Mr. Mackenzie, managers of the Washington Theatre.<sup>1</sup>

*Dear Sir:*

“Permit us to take the liberty of representing to you a burden that oppresses us most heavily, and of requesting your kind endeavors so to represent the case before the mayor and council that we may obtain all the relief that it is in their power to grant.

“You must be aware that we pay nightly to the city a tax of \$6 for permission to perform in the theater; in the year 1832 this amounted to nearly \$1,400 in the aggregate; we pay this tax cheerfully, and all we ask in return is a liberal protection and support from the city authorities.

“There is at present a law in force which authorizes the constables of the city to arrest the colored people if on the street after 9 o’clock without a pass. A great proportion of our audience consists of persons of this caste, and they are consequently deterred from giving us that support that they would otherwise do.

“Can there be any modification of that law suggested, or will the mayor and council authorize us to give passes to those colored persons who leave the theatre for the purpose of proceeding directly to their homes?

“In the city of Baltimore, where we have a theatre, and pay a smaller license than we do here, the law, as regards the colored people, is not acted upon when they are coming or going to the theatre.

“In a pecuniary point of view, we look upon this law as a detriment to us of \$10 nightly, and we have great reason to hope that a law that rests so heavily upon us alone may meet with the kind consideration of the mayor and council, and be so modified as to relieve us from the heavy loss that it causes us at present to incur.

“We have the honor to be, dear sir, your obedient servants,

“JEFFERSON & MACKENZIE,

“Managers of the Washington Theater.”

<sup>1</sup> Submitted by Professor Walter Dyson.